

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

March 10, 2004

The Honorable Roderick R. Paige
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave. S.W.
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Thank you for meeting with us recently to discuss the No Child Left Behind Act, and for your response to our correspondence on this matter. Unfortunately, your response fails to address the important concerns raised in our letter – concerns that are shared by parents, teachers, and school officials around the country.

In our January letter, we raised specific questions related to teacher quality, supplemental services and school choice, the adequacy of assessments, accountability and graduation rates, parental involvement, and the lack of funding for the law. These are serious matters that warrant a full discussion – much more than could be accomplished at our meeting on February 24 and much more than was contained in your response to our letter.

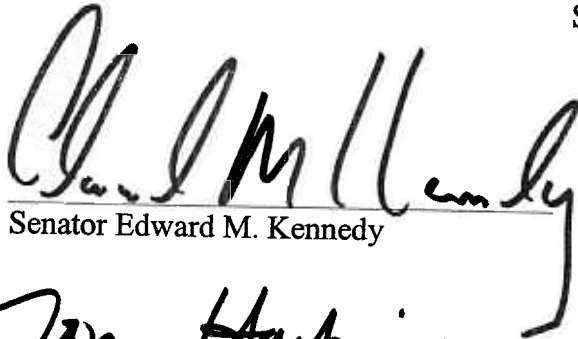
We know that any major reform involves growing pains and controversy. But to dismiss and criticize those who are raising concerns about this process – as occurred two weeks ago with your opinion editorial in the *Washington Post* – demonstrates a failure to fully appreciate the scope of these concerns or the importance of addressing them in the law's implementation. Such a mischaracterization does a grave disservice to our efforts and to the efforts of millions around America who work hard each day to improve public education for our children. Moreover, we believe the Department has yet to acknowledge the full impact of its policies on the challenges associated with carrying out the law. It is critical that these reforms are implemented well for the good of our nation's children, not in the interest of partisan politics.

As your response to us was given first to the press corps before it was delivered to Congress, we assume that the letter was intended at least as much for public consumption as for use by the education committees in the Senate and House. Therefore, we enclose a reiteration of concerns of the public related to improving the efforts of schools, teachers, and parents to carry out these reforms. We respectfully request a written response to each of these items, including your further consideration and reaction to the policy issues raised in our previous correspondence.

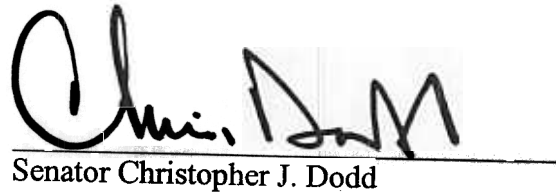
Our concerns regarding the implementation of the Act are motivated by a desire to deliver the reform and resources that millions of low-income, minority, disabled and limited English proficient children need to succeed in school. The nation's schools and communities face real and practical challenges in carrying out this work. Timely and effective implementation of the law is necessary to address these challenges.

We appreciate your offer to resume Congressional briefings on the law's rules, regulations, and guidance, and look forward to that opportunity, as well as your written responses to our questions.

Sincerely,



Senator Edward M. Kennedy



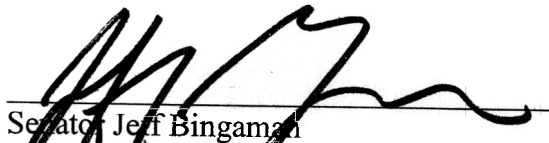
Senator Christopher J. Dodd



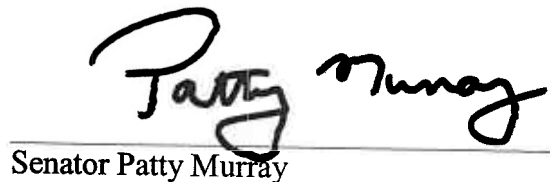
Senator Tom Harkin



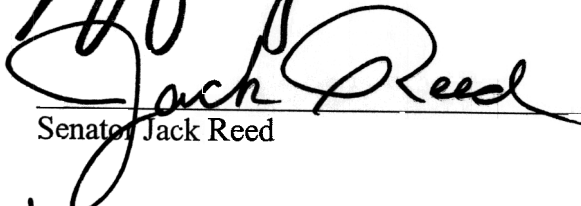
Senator Barbara A. Mikulski



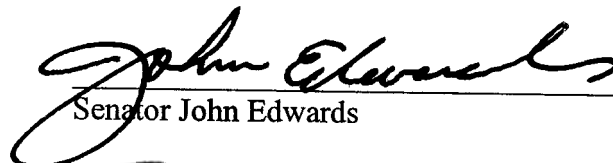
Senator Jeff Bingaman



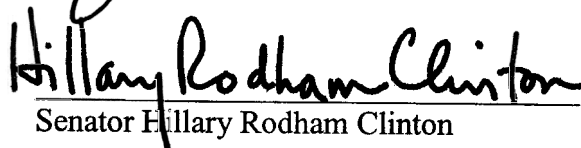
Senator Patty Murray



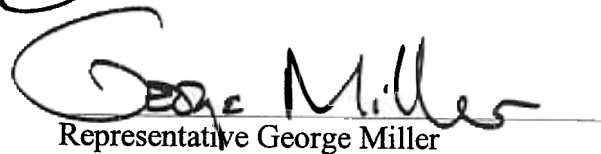
Senator Jack Reed



Senator John Edwards



Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton



Representative George Miller